

Date of Hearing: Feb. 2, 2023

Amy L. Ruddle
Silver Spring, MD 20901

TESTIMONY ON SB0051 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Criminal Procedure - Reasonable Suspicion and Probable Cause - Cannabis

TO: Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Amy L. Ruddle

My name is Amy Ruddle. I am a resident of District 20. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0051, Criminal Procedure - Reasonable Suspicion and Probable Cause – Cannabis.

I am a small business owner, attend Temple Emanuel synagogue in Kensington, MD, and am also a member of and volunteer for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Montgomery County. I am compelled to provide testimony in favor of SB0051 because of my Jewish values: a central tenet of my faith is that all people are equally precious and worthy; moreover, according to the principal of tikkun olam, it is my responsibility to actively fight social, racial, and economic inequity in my community (and the world at large). I also write today as an individual living with mental illness who is also able to articulate my lived experience, and I believe it is my responsibility to advocate for myself and people like me. It's because of these values that I write my testimony today.

I am in favor of banning odor searches because I believe that an important component of public safety is limiting unnecessary interactions between police and community members. Historically, Marylanders of color, immigrants, members of the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities, and those experiencing mental health crises have often been harmed by police, regardless of police intention. As someone who advocates constantly for reducing unnecessary police interaction from the mental health crisis perspective, I am doing the same today in support of the rights of the aforementioned groups, especially black Marylanders who are more likely to be stopped and searched by police.

We know that traffic stops disproportionately injure and kill drivers of color. To continue allowing the odor of cannabis to be probable cause to remove someone from their car adds greater danger to traffic stops and increases the likelihood of people of color being unjustly criminalized. Furthermore, with the legalization of cannabis in Maryland, it makes absolutely no sense to continue to use the odor of a legal substance to as probable cause for a search.

I believe passing this legislation will help to reduce unnecessary police interactions, which will in turn help to transform public safety in our community. I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB0051.